

# Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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**Effective Date:** 3/12/99

**Series:** Safety Management

**Part 485:** Safety and Occupational Health Program

**Chapter 22:** Watercraft Safety

**Originating Office:** Office of Managing Risk and Public Safety

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## 485 DM 22

**22.1 Purpose.** To establish minimum requirements for the safe operation of Department of the Interior watercraft and other non-motorized boats, and for the training and certification of Departmental watercraft operators.

### 22.2 References.

- A. 33 CFR, Navigation and Navigable Waters, Subchapter S, Boating Safety.
- B. 46 CFR 2, Shipping, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Transportation, Requirements.
- C. 410 DM, Department of the Interior Property Management Regulations.

### 22.3 Definitions.

- A. Motorboat. Any watercraft 65 feet or less in length, that does not require a U.S. Coast Guard license or certification to operate.
- B. Operator. The individual in physical control of the watercraft.
- C. Motorboat Classifications:
  - (1) Class A. Motorboat less than 16 feet in length.
  - (2) Class 1. Motorboat 16 feet to less than 26 feet in length.
  - (3) Class 2. Motorboat 26 feet to less than 40 feet in length.
  - (4) Class 3. Motorboat 40 feet to 65 feet in length.
- D. Watercraft. Boats and ships, collectively, including air boats, sailboats, and every description of watercraft, except seaplanes, which are used or capable of being used, as a means of transportation on water; and are propelled by machinery whether or not such machinery is the principle source of propulsion.

**22.4 Requirements.** Bureaus engaged in watercraft operations will establish a watercraft safety program that includes the following minimum requirements:

- A. Safe Watercraft Operation.
  - (1) Departmental watercraft will be operated in a safe and prudent manner and in accordance with recognized Federal, State, and local laws and standards, in addition to the requirements of this Chapter.
  - (2) Departmental watercraft will meet or exceed applicable U.S. Coast Guard design/equipment requirements.

(3) In addition to basic safety devices required by local, State, or Federal regulations, Departmental watercraft will be outfitted, based on expected conditions, with other equipment necessary for safe operation. This may include communications gear, navigation aids, and Satnav. Special consideration should be given for the use of emergency location devices such as Emergency Position Indicator Radio Beacon or personal locator beacons. Use of these devices is highly recommended where situations may warrant.

(4) Operators of Departmental watercraft shall be adequately trained, properly tested and certified, prior to official operation of any Departmental watercraft. Certification will be in accordance with Section 22.5 of this Chapter. Prior to certification, employees may practice motorboat operation under the supervision of a certified operator aboard the watercraft. Motorboat operation by non-certified employees will only be used to gain experience prior to completing the necessary training requirements and being certified.

(5) On Class A or Class 1 vessels, all persons must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) at all times while on board. On Class 2 or Class 3 vessels, all persons must wear U.S. Coast Guard approved PFDs at all times when on an open space such as the deck, and at the discretion of the vessel operator at other locations on the vessel.

(6) PFDs will be international orange in color and equipped with retro reflective tape in accordance with 46 CFR 25.25-15. (See Appendix 3 of this Chapter.)

(7) Deviation from the requirements of Section 22.4A(6) of this Chapter may be permitted if special mission requirements, such as may be involved in special law enforcement operations, cannot be otherwise satisfied. Deviations must be authorized in writing by the supervisor of the organizational unit conducting the operation prior to the conduct of the activity. The written authorization will identify alternate safety measures to be taken. Deviations will be authorized on a case-by-case basis except where they have the concurrence of a regional (or equivalent) safety manager. In those cases, the deviation may be authorized for a period not to exceed one year. Deviation from other requirements of this Chapter is not permitted.

(8) Cold water protective equipment, such as exposure suits and/or immersion suits, will be provided where cold water conditions pose a hazard during watercraft operations. All personnel on board will be trained in the use of this equipment.

(9) Periodic inspection and maintenance programs will be established for all Departmental watercraft, as required by reference identified in Section 22.2C of this Chapter. Records of inspections and maintenance will also be kept in accordance with Section 22.2C.

(10) Departmental employees operating watercraft subject to U.S. Coast Guard licensing regulations will be licensed in accordance with the requirements of reference identified in Section 22.2B of this Chapter, notwithstanding the general exemption of Federal titled watercraft under that reference. Departmental watercraft will meet the applicable U.S. Coast Guard inspection and certification requirements.

#### B. Operator Training and Certification.

(1) Operators of Departmental watercraft will be trained in safe watercraft operation in accordance with the requirements of this Chapter.

(a) Operators of all motorboats, other than those requiring U.S. Coast Guard licensed operators (see reference identified by Section 22.4B(1)(b) of this Chapter), will successfully complete the Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) training requirements specified in Section 22.5C and Appendix 2 of this Chapter. All current operators will be trained and certified in accordance with these requirements.

(b) Operators of watercraft covered by U.S. Coast Guard requirements identified in Section 22.2A will complete all training and certification requisites for operation of those vessels.

(2) Motorboat operator certification will be valid for a period of five years, except that operators certified before October 1, 1995, will remain certified until October 1, 1999. Prior to recertification, operators will complete an 8-hour refresher course that addresses the minimum subject areas described in Section 2.4 of Appendix 2 of this Chapter.

(3) Operators of non-motorized boats are exempted from the requirements of Section 22.5 below. However, they must receive alternate appropriate training necessary for the safe operation of these boats, as determined by the bureau safety manager.

## **22.5 Training and Certification.**

A. The Office of Managing Risk and Public Safety, in coordination with the bureaus, will develop and maintain standards for the Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC), the MOCC, and the 8-hour refresher training.

B. Appendix 1 outlines the MOICC standards. Employees successfully completing the MOICC will be authorized to present the MOCC and to certify individuals to operate Departmental watercraft. Completion of the MOICC satisfies the requirements of Section 22.4B(1)(a) of this Chapter.

C. Appendix 2 outlines the authorized local MOCC standards. Appendix 2 details minimum requirements only; bureaus should add additional modules meeting specific bureau and local needs. Individuals successfully completing the MOCC will be certified for operation of Departmental watercraft. This course is to be instructed by persons trained in the MOICC as described in Appendix 1 of this Chapter. Training materials will be developed by the Department and distributed to bureaus as necessary for reproduction and use.

D. Other watercraft training programs may be substituted for the Departmental MOCC. Requests for substitution must be submitted to the bureau safety manager or, at his or her discretion, the bureau designated responsible person identified in Section 22.5E. Substituted training must demonstrate that it will meet the MOCC objectives, including on-water proficiency. (See Appendix 2.) Examples of acceptable training are the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Boat Operators Training Course and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) Marine Law Enforcement Training Program.

E. (1) Each bureau with watercraft operations will designate an individual as the responsible person for all watercraft training and certification activities within the organization. This individual will help coordinate watercraft safety activities and operator certification functions, and serve as a program point of contact with other bureaus and the Department. That individual must have successfully completed the Departmental approved 40-hour MOICC as outlined in Appendix 1. For implementation of this Chapter, this individual must complete the training prior to October 1, 1996. Additional instructors will be designated, as necessary to assist in motorboat operator certification training. All instructors must complete the Departmental MOICC.

(2) Watercraft Safety Work Group. A Departmental standing Watercraft Safety Working Group will be established to serve as a forum for peer group discussion of watercraft safety issues, and to provide policy and program recommendations and other input to the Department of the Interior Safety and Occupational Health Council. The work group membership will consist of the bureau coordinators identified in Section 22.5E(1) above, in addition to other designated individuals. The work group will meet as necessary, but generally at least once annually.

## STANDARDS

1.1 **Course Description.** The MOICC is a course targeted toward experienced motorboat operators. It stresses the learning of specific motorboat handling techniques and knowledge through extensive hands-on practical exercises and instruction, with a minimum of classroom presentation. Since one objective of this course is to qualify individuals to present MOCC training to other Departmental personnel, there is additional training in instructional techniques and presentation.

1.2 **Course Objectives.** The MOICC objectives are to:

A. Provide attendees with specific skills and knowledge needed to safely operate watercraft.

B. Familiarize attendees with state-of-the-art watercraft safety equipment and other gear, through demonstration and actual use.

C. Train and qualify personnel to serve as instructors of the MOCC.

1.3 **Course Length.** The MOICC will include at least 36 instructional hours. Course instructional hours may be increased to address specific bureau operational needs.

1.4 **Minimum Subject Areas.** The following mandatory subject areas will be presented in the MOICC:

A. Bureau Watercraft Policies.

B. Required Safety Equipment.

C. Motorboats and Motorboat Maintenance.

D. Trailers and Trailer Maintenance.

E. Navigation Aids/Rules of the Road.

F. Emergency Operations.

G. Fire Suppression.

H. Motorboat Orientation/Marlinspike.

I. Motorboat At-Speed and Low-Speed Maneuvering.

J. Alongside Maneuvering.

K. Trailing

L. Towing.

M. Instructional Techniques.

1.5 **Other Standards.** A maximum student/instructor ratio of 3:1 will be maintained.

## STANDARDS

2.1 **Course Description.** The MOCC is a course targeted toward individuals whose jobs require them to operate watercraft for the Department. It stresses the learning of specific motorboat handling techniques and knowledge through extensive hands-on practical exercises and instruction, with a minimum of classroom presentation.

2.2 **Course Objectives.** The MOCC objectives are to:

A. Provide attendees with specific skills and knowledge needed to safely operate watercraft.

B. Familiarize attendees with state-of-the-art watercraft safety equipment and other gear, through demonstration and actual use,

C. Allow attendees to demonstrate, through written examination and physical demonstration, that they have adequate grasp of motorboat handling techniques and knowledge to safely operate a motorboat.

2.3 **Course Length.** The MOCC will include at least 24 instructional hours. Course instructional hours may be increased to address specific bureau operational needs.

2.4 **Minimum Subject Areas.** The following mandatory subject areas will be presented in the MOCC:

A. Agency Watercraft Policies.

B. Required Safety Equipment.

C. Motorboats and Motorboat Maintenance.

D. Trailers and Trailer Maintenance.

E. Navigation Aids/Rules of the Road.

F. Emergency Operations.

G. Fire Suppression.

H. Motorboat Orientation/Marlinspike.

I. Motorboat At-Speed and Low-Speed Maneuvering.

J. Alongside Maneuvering.

K. Trailing.

L. Towing.

2.5 **Other Standards.**

A. A maximum student/instructor ratio of 3:1 should be maintained to ensure that attendees obtain necessary operating techniques and knowledge.

B. MOCC instructors will have successfully completed the MOICC. Instructors will participate in MOCC presentations at least once over any three year period to maintain proficiency.

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**APPENDIX 3**

**RETRO REFLECTIVE MATERIAL FOR PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES  
(REFERENCE 46 CFR 25.25-15)**

“(a) Each life preserver, each marine buoyant device intended to be worn, and each buoyant vest carried on a vessel must have Type I retro reflective material that is approved under Subpart 164.018 of this chapter.

(b) Each item required to have retro reflective material must have at least 200 sq. cm. (31 sq. in.) of material attached to its front side, at least 200 sq. cm. of material on its back side, and, if the item is reversible, at least 200 sq. cm. of material on each of its reversible sides. The material attached on each side of the item must be divided equally between the upper quadrants of the side, and the material in each quadrant must be attached as closely as possible to the shoulder area of the item.”

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